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THE INDEBTEDNESS OF THE STATE TO THE CLERGY.

A

SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE

HIS EXCELLENCY GEORGE N. BRIGGS,

GOVERNOR,

HIS HONOR JOHN REED,

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR,

THE HONORABLE COUNCIL,

AND

THE LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS,

AT THE

ANNUAL ELECTION, JANUARY 2, 1851.

BY EDWARDS A. PARK,
Abbot Professor in Andover Theological Seminary.

BOSTON:

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1851.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, January 3, 1851.

ORDERED, That Messrs. Russell and Keyes be a Committee to present the thanks of the Senate to Professor EDWARDS A. PARK, for the sermon delivered by him on Thursday last, before the Executive and the two branches of the Legislature of the Commonwealth, and that a copy of the same be requested for publication.

C. L. KNAPP, CLERK.

S E R M O N.

ECCLESIASTES IX, 15.

Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city ; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

IN the kingdom of nature the greatest effects are produced by occult forces. Magnetism and electricity had been performing their mightiest results for ages before their existence was recognized. Gravitation is a latent power which worlds obey in silence. Throughout the sphere of mind, also, energies are felt when not acknowledged. By the force of an idea, one man will move a whole community, and he will be forgotten while his idea lives on. There is a class of persons who, in some states of our Union, are debarred by law from all civil office, and among whom a rich man is a phenomenon. The spirit of their profession and their habits of thought disincline, or perhaps incapacitate them for pecuniary speculation. They are persons whose rightful influence comes from their good thoughts and good character. These are their wisdom, and by it, through the aid of Heaven, they deliver the State from many an evil. Still, the results of their labor are often delicate, refined, and therefore unnoticed. The consequence is, that no

one who limits his view to tangible benefits remembereth these same poor men.

It may be thought a singular and forced process by which this description can be applied to clergymen. They have often dwelt in ceiled houses ; they have been the first officers in the realm, and have held their foot on the neck of kings. And as they have not been always poor, neither, by any means, have they been always wise ; for it has been said by one who has, however, overstated the truth, “that the surest sign of the divine authority of our religion is, that it has not yet been exterminated by those who have essayed to preach it.” In lieu of delivering the State from harm, the State has often prayed to be delivered from them ; and, so far from not being remembered, it is impossible for the millions who have suffered by them ever to forget them.

For the faults of the clergy we have no time now to apologize. It were as unsafe to condemn them in a mass as to extol them in a mass. Their ranks have included some of the worst, and some of the best men whom the world has ever seen. We may consider them, however, not as they have uniformly been in fact, but as we may reasonably expect them to be ; as complying with the *tendencies* of their office ; as representatives of a doctrinal system which is better than they are themselves ; as faithful, in some good measure, to their professions ; as identifying their own history with much of the history of the gospel ; as “living epistles,” imperfect, indeed, but yet fairly expressive of the truth. We may consider them as they have usually

appeared among the various sects of this Commonwealth ; and, not dilating on their highest usefulness to the spiritual and eternal interests of men, we may take a narrower view of their function, and in this grave presence may consider, I trust, without any unfitness,

THE INDEBTEDNESS OF THE STATE TO THE CLERGY.

We might illustrate this indebtedness by describing the effort which would be needed for *undoing* the good already done through clerical influence, and by describing the scenes which would ensue if this influence should now entirely cease. But, pursuing a more direct method, we may remark, that

I. The State is indebted to the clergy for their influence in promoting the comfort of the people. Other things being equal, that nation is the most secure whose citizens are the most happy, and the citizens are the most happy when their natural sensibilities have at once the freest and most healthful play. Hence it is one aim of the Commonwealth to satisfy, where it wisely can, the instinctive impulses of the people. It provides a fit gratification for the sense of honor, the spirit of liberty, the love of enterprise, of repose, of amusement even. Sometimes it regulates prices, forbids dangerous sports, encourages the fine arts, increases the facilities of locomotion, with the primary intent of diffusing good cheer which wins men to good citizenship. More than one Government has been convulsed with revolutions, merely because it did not appease the appetite of hunger among the populace. Now

there is in man a religious sentiment, sometimes noiseless because it is deep, and sometimes the deepest when partially repressed, which must be gratified, or man becomes restive, querulous, tumultuous, ungovernable. It is a complex feeling, not always nor in general involving a holy preference, but including some necessary processes of our very constitution. Much of it consists in man's natural tendency to look upward, to revere a power above him, to feel his dependence upon it, an involuntary thankfulness toward it, a moral accountability to it, a hope of being rewarded by it for virtues, a fear of being punished by it for vices, a dread of it as just, a complacency in it as bounteous and loving. This religious sentiment will and must be expressed. Here it resembles not the fire in the flint which is struck out by concussion, but the light of a lamp which is itself radiant. For one mode of its expression, it insists on having a consecrated order of men who shall be an embodiment of the religious idea. It demands either the priest or the minister as an organ of communication between earth and heaven,—an organ through which the feelings of the people may be uttered to God, and the richest favors of God may be transmitted to the people. It is a dictate of nature, that such an organ be required by men for expressing their devotedness to a superior power, because, themselves being disturbed by the turmoils of life, they confide so much the more in a selected band who dwell amid the stillness of the temple, and are imagined to have the spirit as they are seen to have

the marks of peculiar sanctity. On the same principle, it is an impulse of nature that men desire a special organ for receiving their choicest gifts from heaven ; because, immersed as men are in the cares of life, they need a class of teachers from whom they may gain spiritual wisdom. They have a faith in the teaching and example of those who devote their life to the mysteries of religion, as they have a faith in the instructions of professed mechanicians, or philosophers, or jurists. It is sometimes asked, whether the ministry be a divine or merely human institution. It is divine as the religious sentiment itself. It is divine as the human soul. It was no more devised by man than his constitutional instincts were devised by him. Mr. Hume says,* that priests may “ justly be regarded as an invention of a timorous and abject superstition ;” but it is a superstition which cannot be reasoned down, nor flattered down, nor awed down, nor sneered down. It is no more timorous than our very conscience, no more abject than is our filial affection. It pervades the wide world. Every tribe of men has its sacred orders. They are in the pagoda, the mosque, the cathedral, the meeting-house. The rites of worship have not been multiplied by the gospel, but rather diminished,—made less instead of more imposing ; yet we might as soon find a musical people without professed musicians, and a seafaring people without an order of captains, and a martial people without a rank of headmen, as a nation who receive the gospel and

* *Essay X.*

disown its Sabbaths and its teachers. With us, the alternative is between the Christian religion and no religion at all; and therefore, as we accept Christianity, so we must take with it some form of its ministry. This ministry has indeed a positive, which is of itself a sure basis, but this basis over-lies a moral ground-work. The adaptation of the office to the very make of the soul is a signature of its divine origin, and is alike the cause and the proof of its irrepressible influence. When men are forcibly deprived of their religious counsellors, they refuse to be comforted. Hence, the Gregories and the Innocents have regulated their government by the principle, that the masses of men, who can bear all things else, will never long endure an interdict on their ministers, and therefore a monarch can be punished most effectively by silencing, on his account, the priesthood in his kingdom. For his people, if shut out from their sanctuaries, will be as uneasy as if barred from the free air, and sooner or later will trample on the throne and rush over it to the altar, or else will persuade their king to make concessions, any concessions, to purchase, to beg a resumption of those soothing offices with which the fondest affections of men, women and children are intertwined.

When in the gloom of night death comes to the first-born of a mother, it is in her very nature to listen for the voice of the man of God who may say, "it is well with the child." To the mourners who bend over the bier, and take their farewell of the friend whom they are to see no more, there is a

meaning which they must feel, for they are so made as to feel it either for good or ill, in the words of their Comforter in heaven, who speaks to them through his anointed servants on earth. As the human sensibilities are, the best reliefs for the afflicted will not, even if they can, be enjoyed where there is no order of men distinctively and divinely set apart to administer them. Although the name of a pastor is seldom mentioned by an historian,* yet the real unwritten history of the race is not, in the main, made up of wars and of diplomatic manœuvres, but of those domestic griefs which the pastor assuages, and of those private joys which he hallows. He supplies a want too profound to be reached by mere civil enactments, too delicate to be touched by armed magistrates, too radical to be left without the care of philanthropists especially devoted to it. The clergy, then, instead of being, as they are sometimes regarded, mere goads and stings to the public conscience, made for teasing and annoying a quiet population, are the ministers of solace, and of that peace which no political economy can give or take away. They earn more thanks than they receive from the Government for coöperating with it in multiplying the satisfactions of life, and for insinuating a happy influence into those recesses of the soul, which are closed against all other than spiritual appliances.

* There is too much truth in the remark of Dr. Channing, that history "has not a place even in the margin for the minister and the school mistress."

II. The State is indebted to the clergy for their influence in educating the people. Every land should have its native literature, and especially our land, which is overspread with writings foreign to us alike in origin and spirit. Now, the religious is the most durable part of our national literature, and this should be in harmony with the genius of our institutions. The larger portion of our sacred lore is in the products of the pulpit. If the sermons preached in our land during a single year were all printed, they would fill a hundred and twenty million octavo pages. Many of these sermons are, indeed, specimens of human weakness, but the frailest vase may hold roots that will far outgrow its own dimensions. The themes of the dullest preacher may germinate into a quickening life. The mind is so framed as to be stimulated by the queries, Who am I? Of what kingdom am I a spiritual citizen? Am I to live forever? If so, in what realm, in what condition, with what companions, under what laws? The Judge from whom there is no appeal, the Monarch whose sway over me will be without end—how can I gain his favor? Now the church is the people's university for the study of such questions. The minister, therefore, is a teacher of science; the science of the human soul, in which every cautious man feels a personal interest; the science of that Great Spirit whose attributes either alarm or delight men, and in either case touch their deepest sympathies. This is the science for which man was made, for which he was made inquisitive; which has already, more than any other object, tasked the inge-

nuity of thinkers, and waked up the sensibilities of men otherwise lethargic. It arouses the religious principle ; and this, when started, sets all the wheels of mental activity in motion.* It feels after the truth, if haply it may find it. It expands the character. It is this principle which made our forefathers great and trustworthy men. Many a pastor has noticed that a renewal of Christian faith is often combined with a renovation of the intellectual life. And the minister teaches not in the listless way of writing books, but with the living voice ; with those tones and emphases which, in an orator like our own Stillman, are themselves almost a doctrine ; not with the voice alone, but with the hand, which opens in order to give out the truth ; with the eye, which radiates a thought unutterable by the lips ; with the whole person, which bodies forth what is concealed within.† And instead of writing on this science for here and there an insulated reader, the minister preaches to a sympathizing congregation, to fathers

* The celebrated infidel, D'Alembert, speaking of the Protestant Reformation, says: "The new doctrines of the reformers, defended on one side and attacked on the other with that *ardor which the cause of God, well or ill understood, is alone able to inspire*, equally obliged their defenders and their opponents to acquire instruction. Emulation, *animated by this powerful motive*, increased all kinds of knowledge, and light, raised from amidst error and dissension, was cast upon all objects, even such as appeared most foreign to those in dispute."

† When John Adams was informed, in a letter from a parish committee, that the church-pew which he had then recently selected for himself was, by means of an intervening pillar, badly situated for his seeing the preacher, he returned the following laconic reply: "Faith cometh by hearing." But in the department of oratory, men hear with their eyes as well as ears. The full hearing of the truth involves a vision of the man who expresses it.

and mothers surrounded by their offspring in comely attire. With this animating influence of a multitude upon each other, he combines the influence of a consecrated day, when business is stilled so as to make his whisper audible. He speaks, too, in the temple which men feel to be sacred, and in which the pulpit is raised in dignity above the pews. All these incidents, making his hearers the more susceptible, make his words the more impressive. He preaches, also, not to those alone who can educate themselves, but to the masses of men, who depend on him for their moral instruction ; who, being near the basis, form the support of the political system ; who are continually sending up both men and influences to invigorate the higher classes of society. It is one seal of the Divine wisdom in our religion, that truth so disciplinary should be made known in a method so quickening, to the class of men who are in such peculiar need of being trained in this peculiar way. And here lies the eloquence in the climax of Him who spake as never man spake, and who specifies, as the signs of his mission, that “the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk ; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear ; the dead are raised up, and” (more than all these physical blessings) “the poor have the gospel **PREACHED** to them.”

It is not, then, to any unusual genius possessed by clergymen—for often their character is disfigured by no such excrescence—nor to any magical arts which they practise, that we must ascribe the enlivening influence of their words ; but we impute it to the adaptations of their office, to the inherent fit-

nesses of their message, to the attendant influences of Him who blends his own power with the truth which he has revealed. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton says,* “A man must preach very well indeed, before he conveys such a lesson of the greatness of God, and the unworthiness of man, as a view of the heavens discloses.” This is well said; but if any minister has the soul of a minister, and believes the pure gospel, and feels what he believes, and speaks what he feels, he preaches very well indeed; for the truths which he utters are more radiant than the stars of the sky, and his soul, if duly enlarged by those truths, is greater than the expanse of the heavens, and the shining forth of such truths from such a soul awakens and enlightens men who would sleep under the starry heavens without once dreaming of their Author. And the same noble baronet who has now been named, and who has, perhaps, achieved as good a work for the imprisoned and the enslaved as any man of the last half century, says,† near the close of his beneficent career, “Whatever I have done in my life for Africa, the seeds of it were sown in my heart in Wheeler Street Chapel.” “It was much, and of vast moment, that I there learned from” the minister of that sanctuary. And what and where is Wheeler Street Chapel? The world have never heard of Wheeler Street Chapel, but the world have heard of Sir Fowell Buxton; and the chain of the slave loosens at the mention of his name, and Ethiopia stretches out her hands to welcome him to her fond embrace; and the children of her schools,

* Memoir, p. 203.

† Ibid, p. 46.

which were founded by his care, have learned his history by heart, and will engrave it on bracelets of gold around their wrists;—yet the eloquence with which he instructed the British Senate, the skill with which he gained the sympathies of his countrymen, and the vigor with which he broke the bands of the West India slave, he traced back to the educating influences of a pulpit in a small, weather-beaten chapel of Spitalfields; for from that pulpit he learned those truths that touch the most elastic springs of intellectual as well as moral enterprise,—that are subtle enough to reach, as nothing else can, the hiding-places of the conscience, and to make it familiar with great thoughts which make the mind great, and so to regulate the association of ideas that one may find “sermons in stones, books in the running brooks,” and religious lessons in the starry heavens that preach so well.

The strictly religious truths of the Bible must, from their intellectual spirit, have an affinity with all knowledge. He who is curious to learn them is the more easily interested in everything which can illustrate them. The sciences pertaining to the works of God, are involved in the science pertaining to his character. Not a few mechanical inventions, even, have been made by clergymen. The world has been enriched by the chemical researches of Priestley, but he indulged himself in these as an aid to his theological, which were his main studies. Many minds have been expanded by the astronomical discourses of Chalmers, but he studied the stars of heaven as moral lights to guide him in his pil-

grimage through this dark world. Much of the ethical philosophy now taught in our learned schools, is borrowed from the sermons of Bishop Butler. The sensibilities of men have been ennobled by the architecture of the cathedral, but the sublimer principles of this architecture have been discovered by the priests in their aim to image forth an inward by an outward grandeur. The public taste has been refined by the music of the choir, but many of the most solemn harmonies have been composed by the ministers of the altar. It is the religious sentiment which has suggested the costliest products of the chisel and the pencil, for whatever is grand or beautiful is affianced to religious truth. More than one Lord Chancellor has committed to memory the sermons of more than one Dr. Barrow, merely for their *inevitable* words which come from a hearty faith. We infer the conduct of men from their interests, and the interests of a clergyman require him to disseminate as well as to gain intelligence. "Because the preacher was wise," says Ecclesiastes, "he still taught the people knowledge." He discourses with a freer and a manlier spirit, when the minds of his hearers have been raised up to an interest in the lofty discussions pertaining to Him before whom the mountains flow down. We confess with shame that the preacher has not always understood his interests. He has often been afraid to learn, and still oftener afraid to teach. But this was the abuse, not the use, of his office. In the darkest ages, however, he made "the benefit of the clergy" arise from an erudition superior to that of most other men. In

those cold ages, the church, at immense cost and pains, fondly preserved the literature of the world, even as the mother who lay freezing on the snow wrapped her own tattered garments around her babe, which she warmed and cherished in her bosom. There was darkness in the world at those times, because the messengers of heaven forgot their errand to preach the gospel. They deemed the truths of religion so stimulating as to be dangerous for the common mind. Still, even then they betrayed the affinities of their office: they were the jurists, the arithmeticians, the rhetoricians of the world; they comprehended all the sciences and even the arts in theology, and some of them must even now be regarded as prodigies of learning. The best universities of the old world have been founded by clerical influence. Nearly all our own colleges, as those at Waterville, Middlebury, Hanover, Providence, New Haven, Princeton, were organized by ministers, for the main purpose of disseminating the religious truth which loves to find and to make men intelligent. When Boston contained no more than thirty houses, and Massachusetts no more than twenty-five civilized towns, the pastors devised the plan of Harvard College, with the primary intent of making worthy preachers and fit hearers of *the* truth, which is the life of the soul. It is interesting to notice the degree in which divines like our Mayhews and Chauncys labored to make plain the very rudiments of popular instruction. And, at the present day, no small part of the minister's energy is spent in aiding the teachers, animating the pupils, preserving the order and

inspecting the progress, of our common schools.* Without his genial interest, these schools had never been, as they now are, the treasures of our State. Our clergy and our schoolmasters have long been in communion, so that one of our own native poets has said of our Commonwealth, that she never

“dreads the sceptic’s puny hands,
While near her school the church-spire stands,
Nor fears the blinded bigot’s rule,
While near her church-spire stands a school.”

There are a thousand other avenues through which the learning of a clergyman, who is what he ought to be, flows into the very hearts of his people. The fact that he is a scholar adds a power, and the fact that he is known to be a scholar adds an authority, to even his common words. From such a man as Owen, or Bates, or Calamy, or Poole, or Flavel, each of whom wrote his scholastic folios amid the pressure of parochial care, there went forth—it could not be otherwise—there stole forth from his very attitude and mien as he strolled along the by-ways of his parish—there breathed itself forth an influ-

* Professor Stowe, who has held an important official connection with the public schools of Ohio, says: “My experience has taught me to despair of establishing, with any permanency, even a good district school, where there is not a good church and an intelligent ministry to watch over and sustain it.” Prof. Sears, the indefatigable Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, says: “The efficient coadjutors which I have had the happiness to find in all parts of the State, while engaged in my official duties, belong to no one profession or class of men. It may, however, be said, without any injustice to others, that the clergy, of every name in the Commonwealth, have been second to no other men in respect to an enlightened policy and energetic action in promoting the education of the people.”

ence which raised the aims and refined the thoughts of young men. Amid the multitude of brighter names which have adorned the pulpit, we seldom hear of Robert Bolton, who published five theological quartos, translated the whole of Homer, and commented on the whole of Aquinas, and studied the Fathers as if he cared nothing for his contemporaries; yet this same divine associated with his contemporaries as if he cared nothing for the Fathers, and in his daily walks through the lanes of his precinct, he bore the results of his multifarious learning to the doors of the humblest peasantry. On one page in the life of Baxter we read of his toiling, amid pains and faintness, over the last of the hundred and sixty-six treatises which he wrote for the press, and on another page we read of him laden with the fruits of his erudition, and diffusing the influence of it among the inmates of a hovel at Kidderminster. It is told of an ancient astronomer, that when reproved for his want of patriotism, he defended himself by pleading, "My country is in the heavens." But we read of Jonathan Edwards writing at one hour of the day, which he calls his *leisure* hour, that Treatise on the Will which David Hume and Dugald Stewart and Sir James Mackintosh ranked with the Works of Locke and Leibnitz; and at another, which was his *business* hour, mingling as a father with the untutored Indians of his neighborhood, preaching once in a week to the Mohawks, and once in a week to the Housatunnucks, and often catechizing their vagrant children. His country, too, was in the heavens; but it was pleasant for him to

walk thither hand in hand with the poor pilgrims, who might otherwise wander far away from the home of the Great Spirit.

I know that men like these do not appear every day and everywhere, but the difference is often in degree, not in kind; for in many a New England hamlet there is now a parsonage where the gems of sacred lore are treasured up, where the spirit of the patriarch is refined by a patient and liberal culture; but while the world is running out in search of noisy captains who boast themselves to be patriots, and escorting them in long processions, "all the while sonorous metal" breathing martial sounds, this man, whose inward worth is equal to his freedom from outward display, and who might have been famed in the senate had he not chosen to minister unto the necessities of the saints, is now living as the educator of a retired parish, speaking a word in season to herdsmen's boys, and imitating while he serves the great Teacher who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not;" but from the circle of hardy youths who enjoy his counsel there will come forth robust and earnest scholars, who will invigorate the literature of their country, and gather to themselves the honors of the State, while no one remembereth the poor wise man who delivered them from their ignorance; but he toils on, willing to be obscure, so he may humbly serve his generation, and waiting with a resigned and pensive spirit for the day when he shall be borne by a few devout men to his burial, and when he who hath been faithful over a few things shall be made ruler

over many things, and shall enter with loud acclaim into the joy of his Lord.

III. The State is indebted to the clergy for their influence in promoting the political virtues.* So gentle and well nigh domestic is the pastor's vocation, as in the view of some to steal away his manly energy. Yet the very men who are most inclined to smile at what they term his effeminate manners, are the most sensitive to his interference with politics. They cannot forgive it unless it be what they significantly call, "*on the right side.*" The reason is, that his words, homely as they may seem, come with a power peculiar to his office, and therefore go down into the recesses of the soul, made as it is for religious appeal. Hence he is suspected of unfairness, when he gives up to a party, what is required for the common good. He should be wise, then, in setting bounds to his political activity. He should be careful that his political influence not only be, but also *seem* to be, in behalf of virtue. He should be and *appear* to be solicitous, not so much for the outward forms as for the moral spirit of politics. Hence he should never be vociferous in civil affairs, so as to let the minister be lost sight of in the politician. His influence on those affairs will be greater and better, if he make them secondary to his more spiritual duties. He loses his political influence if he think too much of it. He must never contend in such a way for the interests of this world, as

* The remainder of this paragraph was omitted in the delivery of the discourse.

to mar the felicity of his pleading for the interests of another. His general rule should be, to make the Sabbath a day of rest, and the sanctuary a place of rest, for friends and foes who are wearied with their earthly strifes. His habits and his sympathies disqualify him for the personal details of politics. When he goes far beyond the discussion of principles into a mere partizanship for men,* he is out of his sphere, and that simplicity which is and ought to be his most amiable virtue, is the means of his being deceived into wrong estimates of character. Still he is a man, a citizen, a teacher, a moral guide, and as such he must utter many truths relating to our civil duties. He must, for example, exhort his hearers to "owe no man anything," even if he should be suspected of looking toward some laws about fraudulent bankruptcy and repudiation. As the theology of the pulpit is linked with all sciences, so is its religion with all virtues. Politics cannot be sealed up hermetically against moral influence. Like the air of heaven this influence pervades every sphere of life. Welcomed or opposed it must be met. Religion will either refine politics, or politics will contaminate religion. In self-defence, therefore, as well as in fealty to the State, the minister pleads for the duties of good citizenship. It is one divine signature of his religion, that the same virtues which it demands without reasoning and merely as enjoined by God, are reasoned out by the physiologist to be

* There is an obvious difference between the discussion of political principles on the one hand, and the *meddling* with politics on the other.

promotive of health, and by the statesman to be needed for the national growth. The germs of political ethics are thus in the Bible. By a train of religious sentiment, Fenelon unfolded the essential principles which Adam Smith afterwards erected into the new science of Political Economy. In an indirect way, the minister is a politician when he explains and enforces, as he does so often, the duties of parents and children: for these duties are essential to the order of the family; this order, as it represents in miniature, so it facilitates the government of a nation; the family is the cement of the political system; and unless it be carefully watched, the Commonwealth will not be peacefully ruled; but all history proves that the virtues of the household will not be long preserved, where they are not fostered by those ministers of the church who, in their lowly services, are among the best ministers of the State. At the commencement of the last half century, some islands of the sea were sunk in the deepest barbarism, but now send their ambassadors to the courts of Europe. A few preachers from New England carried to them the story of that remarkable personage who came to be a model for the child and the parent, the scholar and the teacher, the layman and the priest, the fellow-citizen and the judge, the servant and the lawgiver, the subject and the king, the vanquished and the conqueror;—and that story makes men think of political maxims which it does not expressly mention, and gives men one link which draws after it the whole chain of political virtues.

One of these virtues, which the clergy are inclined by the very genius of their office to encourage is, *that of sustaining the laws and government of the land*. A church-going are apt to be a law-abiding people. Their pastor has a professional regard for law. He loves its moral influence. He esteems a good statute as a sermon, and obedience to it as a preparative for acquiescence in the divine will. He represents religion as consisting in this acquiescence, and he fears that men who love to disobey the ruler whom they have seen, will also disobey the Sovereign whom they have not seen. His office is to prove that the true submission to government involves a benevolent regard to the common good ; that it is therefore not pusillanimous but a noble virtue, and as men must love the law of God in order to acquiesce in the gospel, so they must obey the laws of man in order to enjoy true freedom.

He teaches indeed, on the principles of natural reason, that civil government is of divine origin ; not merely because it exists in the providence of God, for sin itself exists in the same providence, without having God for its author. But civil government is of divine origin, because and so far forth as it is prompted by those normal instincts within us which are of divine workmanship. Our Maker has given us a tendency to revere and obey magistrates. Speaking through our constitution, then, he has ordained them. And as government comes thus from a divine impulse, so it has a divine right ; not merely because it is providentially so strong that it cannot be resisted, and therefore ought to be

welcomed, for a pestilence or an inundation may be providentially irresistible and still not desirable. But government is of divine right, because and so far forth as it is adapted to our natural and fitting wants. These wants are from God ; they indicate the supply which is needed for them ; this supply is political government ; this government then, as it is suited by nature to a demand existing by nature, must be sanctioned by the Author of that nature. He loves to promote our welfare ; our welfare is advanced by the institutions which are fitted to the structure of our minds ; these beneficent institutions, therefore, are authorized as well as originated by him who has incited us to devise, by causing us to demand them. Thus we claim a divine authority for the marriage relation and for the family regimen, because they are not only a result of sensibilities which God has implanted in the soul, but also a means of the happiness and virtue which he has made the end of our being. Desiring this end he has required these means. The theory that government derives its claims from the social compact is in the main a fictitious mode of expressing the idea that government is congenial with our sensibilities and interests, and therefore may be presumed to secure a promise of obedience from us, and hence must be pleasing to God, who chooses that we observe the covenants which himself has predisposed us to make. The theory that government demands our homage on account of its venerable and ancestral associations, resolves itself into the truth that a reverence for old systems was implanted within us

by the Ancient of Days, and he desires that this graceful sentiment be cherished in every form and degree which can harmonize with the paramount law of virtuous progress. In fine, the element of truth existing in all theories of civil government is enveloped in the Christian doctrine, that such government has a divine authority, and this doctrine is essential to the highest influence of those theories. There are masses of men who care little for abstractions. It has been said of them, they "cannot see but they can feel;"* at least they do not see so far as to ultimate utilities, nor so far around as to general results. But they love or fear a personal God who superadds his own sanction to the threatenings of human law, who gives a new sacredness to life as connected with an immortal existence, and to property as a means of spiritual culture; a new meaning to an oath, a religious value to a ballot, a deep solemnity to an office; and who invests the very forms of justice with a distinct majesty. Not in an abstract way, but by living men, his ministers, has the authority of the great lawgiver been associated with human jurisprudence. Hence have these ministers been summoned, either by the wisdom or conscience or policy of rulers, to stand forth as the representatives of the divine will in behalf of human legislation. They have administered the holy sacrament to the king as he has assumed the diadem. They have chanted the Te Deum before the army as it has marched forth to the battle-field. In the dignified simplicity of the gospel they have

* Harrison's Political Aphorisms.

invoked the aid of the Most High on our legislative councils. They have, in various forms, clothed the polity of man with that honor which cometh from nothing but an association with the King of kings.*

There are some laws, perhaps, which unless ennobled by this alliance with the religion of the pulpit, would be regarded as too severe to be sustained. Had not the New Testament unfolded the nature of justice as including in itself the tenderest care for the general peace, there might be a reason for modifying the application of the old command, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The executioner would be deterred from pressing the fatal spring, did not the gospel, which wins our love by its mildness, illustrate the benevolence of the penal code, framed not for

* In the convention of 1787, which framed the Constitution of the United States, Dr. Franklin made, and Roger Sherman seconded the motion, that "henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning." This motion, however, was not made until the 28th of June, when the Convention had been more than four weeks in session, and then "Mr. Hamilton and several others expressed their apprehensions, that however proper such a resolution might have been at the beginning of the Convention, it might, at this late day, bring on it some disagreeable animadversions, &c. Dr. Franklin and Mr. Sherman answered, that the past omission of a duty could not justify a further omission, &c. Mr. Williamson observed, that the true cause of the omission could not be mistaken. The Convention had no funds. Mr. Randolph proposed, in order to give a favorable aspect to the measure, that a sermon be preached, at the request of the Convention, on the 4th of July, and thenceforward prayers. Dr. Franklin seconded this motion." It was not carried, however, and the original motion of Dr. Franklin was lost by a very decisive vote. It is pleasing to reflect that this omission is an anomaly in our highest legislative proceedings. See Sparks's Life of Franklin, Vols. I, pp. 514, 515, and V, pp. 153-155, and Mr. Madison's Journal, *in loco*.

paining the guilty so much as for relieving the innocent; not for grieving a small circle of friends, but for securing the comfort and the virtue of an entire nation. Had not the people of our Commonwealth been saved from a one-sided philanthropy by the comprehensive spirit of the New Testament, which utters a more subduing threat as well as a more cheering promise than the Old; had they not been taught by Him, who came to be our pattern of gentleness, that civilization is something higher than a poetic sentimentalism; that true compassion reaches beyond the man who has abused his race, and guards also the race from being still further abused; that religion is the love of right, and therefore involves the hatred of wrong; aims to bless men, and therefore frowns on all that injures them; pities the sordid temper of the criminal, and therefore watches with the kindlier sympathy over the children and the mothers, the timorous and the frail, who tremble by day and by night in fear of that criminal; had not our fathers been inspired with this conservative spirit of Christianity, still permeating our civil institutions,—we had not seen, and the world had not admired the majestic march of justice through our Commonwealth during the past year; the manliness and dignity of our judges; the firm, cautious and lofty spirit of our councillors, sustaining the law which is made so fearful for the sake of preventing a sin yet more fearful; listening with parental tenderness to every plea of the sufferer, but hearkening also to the voice of God as he says, through the instinctive sentiments of our race,

that the penalty which men are so framed as to dread most of all and last of all, is the fit dissuasive from that last and most appalling of crimes, which hardens the heart against all gentler motives.

Clergymen have been accused, some of them justly, but others unjustly, of pressing the claims of government too far, and of degrading themselves into the mere parasites of the men who happen to be in power.* The more trustworthy divines, however, have not been content with advocating the virtue of allegiance; they have enjoined a second duty: *that of ameliorating the laws and government of the land.* They have recommended this duty in various ways and widely different degrees.

Breathing the spirit of his office, a clergyman is reluctant to think ill of civil enactments, for they need to be revered. Still he has often aided in correcting, when he has not seen, their faults. His teachings have been more useful than his observation has been exact. When advocating an injurious law, he has enforced principles which resulted in amending it.

And when his charity which thinketh no evil has been compelled to recognize the mal-administration

* Mr. Hume says, *Essay IX*, in language altogether too unguarded: "All princes that have aimed at despotic power, have known of what importance it was to gain the established clergy; as the clergy, on their part, have shown a great facility in entering into the views of such princes. Gustavus Vasa was, perhaps, the only ambitious monarch that ever depressed the church at the same time that he discouraged liberty. But the exorbitant power of the bishops in Sweden, who at that time overtopped the crown itself, together with their attachment to a foreign family, was the reason of his embracing such an unusual system of politics."

of lawgivers, he has been slow to condemn them in his public speech; for it is written, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."* Still, without reproaching he has often benefited them, for he has unfolded a system of divine legislation which, in its gradual working, assimilates the government of earth to that of heaven. Immoral codes have sometimes been submitted to him for revision, as when the laws of the Visigoths were humanized by the Councils of Toledo.

But when the mal-feasance of rulers passes a certain line, he cannot but speak out. He dreads the influence of corrupt magistrates as preachers of heresy, as men who will nullify the laws which he is commissioned to proclaim. Therefore, if he live under a government susceptible of peaceful changes, he is required to plead for a reform of statutes that miseducate the soul, benumb the conscience, deaden the sentiment of pity or honor or generosity, and weaken the very basis of government by vitiating the moral principles on which every good government rests. It is sometimes said, that "it is imma-

* Much is said, and wisely, at the present day, against disobedience to rulers. But the spirit of unrighteous disobedience to them, is fostered by the practice of unwarranted slander against them. A faithful preacher dissuades men from "speaking evil of dignities," as well as from refusing subjection to them; and when the disposition is so rife, as in our land, to calumniate the civil authorities, we must expect the consequent disposition to resist them. The fact that our rulers may not belong to our own party, is no excuse for the desire or the practice of saying more against them than the welfare of the State obviously and urgently demands. The careless or unnecessary disparagement of them is one of the worst species of detraction, and has in all ages been condemned by the pulpit.

terial what civil polity we have, provided that the people are honest and intelligent ;" but unless we have the right polity, there is danger that the people will never be honest and intelligent.

Still, the true pastor is far from sanctioning the rule that every injurious statute be of course disobeyed ; for it may be so compacted with beneficent laws that they will stand or fall with it, and the one unsightly stone of an arch must not be pried out from the other stones which depend upon it for their form and pressure. Neither does he sustain the rule that every government, corrupt on the whole, be disobeyed ; for often he has reason to believe that it would be made only the more corrupt by being opposed, and even if overthrown, would give place to a new structure built of the same materials in a worse form. Bad laws and bad rulers are frequently less bad than any which would be at once substituted for them ; and while they cannot claim obedience for their own merits, we may be required to yield obedience for our own usefulness. We only confuse ourselves when we imagine that obedience to a wrong law must necessarily be, or always is in itself sinful. Although a Government has no right to command when we have no right to obey, yet we are often under obligation to obey mandates which the Government ought not to have imposed. For resistance to these mandates may not always be necessary in order to avoid sin, and it may moreover be useless, and if useless it is hurtful, and if hurtful it is offensive to our best friend, for he forbids us to waste our probation in efforts which

threaten evil when they do not promise good, and he often gives a divine right to obedience when he gives none to the government obeyed. It is true, however, singular as it may seem, that the interests of men coincide so far with their duty as to make the larger part of human statutes coincident with the law of God, and to make them, therefore, his laws. In agreement with these principles, the preacher has insisted on the *general* rule, that men obey the law of the land ; not merely that they obey, if they deem the law expedient, but that they obey ; not merely if they approve it, but that they approve of obedience to it ; not that they make the wisdom of a particular statute the condition of their compliance with it, but that they believe in the wisdom of their compliance with it so long as it is a statute. The *general* rule of the "wise man" is to reverence law because it is good, or else to obey it because it is law ; and in such a land as our own, where the legislation is founded on Christian principles, we must presume a statute to be right, unless we have palpable evidence that it is wrong. And even when there is such evidence, the act which the law requires of us may not be wrong like the law which requires it. This act may be unfortunately so complicated with the affairs of a useful government, that, although it may be injurious to a few individuals, yet the omission of it may compromit the safety of the government, and may thus be still more injurious to a larger number of individuals. This is an outward act, and although the same moral choice must be either good or bad, ever the same,

yet many an external deed may vary in its character, become right here and now, although it was wrong there and then. If not commanded, it would be unfit and hurtful, but when it is commanded, it may be less unfit and less hurtful than would be the disobedience to the statute. It is a principle of mere fanaticism, that if an external deed is proper in one relation, therefore it may be performed in all relations ; and if improper in some circumstances, therefore it must be performed in no circumstances, even " though the heavens fall."

But the human mind is like a pendulum swinging from one extreme to the other, and reaching that other because it had been first at the one. It is an extreme view, and therefore a dangerous view, (because an ultraism on one side repels into an ultraism on the other, and it is hostile to the genius of the gospel, and of its true ministers, to advocate any, and of course this extravagance), that the general rule of conformity to human law will never allow an exception.* There is a certain line beyond which

* It is one characteristic of a " wise man," that he knows when and where to make exceptions to a general rule. By forcing the rule of obedience so far as to shut out the rightfulness of any exception whatever, we prejudice men against the rule; while on the contrary, by making exceptions too easy and too numerous, and by undervaluing the strong antecedent presumptions in favor of the existing law, we drive men into the opposite extreme of denying the rightfulness of any exception whatever. " If there be a danger on the one hand," says Dr. Campbell, " of tying the knot of allegiance which binds the subject to the sovereign *too hard*, there is no less danger on the other of making it *too loose*." Usher, Sanderson, Ken, South, Berkeley, and other English clergymen, have contended that the *general* rule of obedience is also a *universal* one. Some of these divines have, as Mr. Macaulay says, " delighted to exhibit the doctrines of non-resistance in a form so exaggerated as to shock

the minister who represents the gospel cannot, and for the good of the State should not pass, in defending the active compliance with law. He has long insisted on the distinction between active and passive obedience, and between disobedience to the preceptive part of law and resistance to the retributive part of it.* While he has dissuaded men from rebelling against an unworthy statute, he has, in some rare instances, counselled their quietly submitting to its sanctions as a less serious evil than their performing its requisitions. The wise preacher has given this counsel when, and only when, the statute has required citizens to violate the clear decisions of a well-trained conscience and the plain will of God : the *clear* decisions of conscience, for this faculty leads us to infer that if there be any doubt, the Government is ordained of heaven to have the benefit of that doubt ; the decisions of a *well-trained* conscience, for this is a faculty which decides aright, only when treated aright, when carefully enlightened, when free from the sinister influence of passion, when combined with an earnest desire, and all possible efforts to learn the good way ; the *plain* will of God, for he wills us to act on the presumption that human laws are just, and that they are his ordinances, unless it be obvious that they violate

common sense and humanity." But nearly all the British divines on whose judgment our countrymen are most apt to rely, have sustained the old doctrine of the Church Fathers, that the general rule of obedience is to be urged strenuously, but still not so blindly as to exclude all exceptions. This has been the doctrine of Jewel, Hooker, Bilson, Bedell, Burnet, Jeremy Taylor, Chillingworth, Hoadly, King, Conybeare, Paley ;—of nearly all the dissenting, and also the Scottish theologians.

* "Aliud est non parere quam resistere."—*Beza*.

other ordinances which are more obviously and imperatively his. Men who seek to be instructed by him will be guided into a knowledge of his statutes, and will cleave to them whether they do or do not sanction the statutes of men. Such is the consistent pastor's faith in the divine providence, that he believes it *salutary* as well as proper, to illustrate the wrongfulness of an evidently immoral and demoralizing law by a specimen of its grievous results, and he doubts not that a prudent Legislature will reform such an enactment rather than multiply fines and pains upon the very men whose moral principles are at once the richest treasure and the best preservative of the State, and who honor the law in general by patiently enduring the penalties which ought never to have been threatened. The divine has aimed to be, and has been a patriot in allowing no expectation that he would advocate a policy which must displease the Author of all national blessings, and must undermine the prosperity by impairing the virtue of the people. His hope has been to raise the tone of morals both in the high and low places of the land, by teaching that we are subjects of Jehovah before, and while, and after we are under the dominion of men, and therefore the plain laws of heaven bind us more thoroughly and deeply than any enactments which may contravene them ; for they bind us in the motive as well as in the deed, by a regard for the soul as well as the body, for time and forever. When the prophets and apostles chose, at the expense of life and liberty, to obey God rather than man ; when the martyrs of the

ancient church welcomed their pains as a reward for not abandoning their rites of worship ; when the Reformers of Germany, the Huguenot clergy of France, the Covenanting divines of Scotland, the Protestant bishops and Puritan ministers of England, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods as a recompense for not transgressing the decisive mandates of Heaven, and not yielding a principle which they knew, and we all know, that God required them to maintain, they were not rebels nor revolutionists ; they did not love their country less as it was, but more as through their example it was to be ; they offered their treasure and their blood as a sacrifice, not for their own land alone, but also for the world, in their time and in all time. And we, above all men, see and feel the results of their patriotism, and if *we*, who are free-born through their influence, are ready to charge the noble army of martyrs, whose very names are hallowed by our prayers, with sedition and treason and insurrection, then we are ready to exhume their bones and scatter their ashes to the winds.

If a deputy should enjoin what was not permitted by the magistrate who deputed him, or if a magistrate should order what was not allowed by the province which appointed him, or if that province should command what the National Government had forbidden, or if the National Government should enact what the Constitution had prohibited, or if the Constitution should require what is expressly interdicted by Jehovah, in every such case of conflicting laws, the true interests of a State forbid that

the higher injunctions be contravened for the sake of compliance with the lower.* The general truth is that the higher sustain the lower, and the command of obedience to the lower presupposes that they will demand no transgression of the higher ; and when this supposition fails, the maxim of Ben Sirach is to be applied, “ Let not the reverence for any man cause thee to sin.” The Christian divine urges upon citizens the apostolic rule, “ Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.” So he urges upon children the rule, “ Obey your parents in all things.” So he urges upon servants the rule, “ Obey in all things your masters.”† In the same revealed sentence which contains the injunction to obey magistrates, is another injunction to “ speak

* “ A constable may a thousand times more excusably pretend authority against the king, or independent of him, than a king can claim authority against God, or independent on him.”—*Richard Baxter’s Holy Commonwealth*.

† “ Yet I believe no Christian will urge, that there would be an obligation to obedience from this precept, should a parent command his child, or a master command his servant *to steal*.” “ Our Lord has given us this express prohibition, *Resist not evil*, and that without any restriction whatever. Yet if this were to be understood by Christians as admitting no exception, it would, among them, abolish magistracy itself. For what is magistracy, but, if I may allowed the expression, a bulwark erected for the defence of the society, and consequently for the purpose of *resisting evil*? ” These remarks are from a sermon of Dr. George Campbell, “ preached at Aberdeen, Dec. 12, 1776, being the Fast Day appointed by the King on account of the Rebellion in America.” This celebrated critic stigmatizes the “ ringleaders of the American Revolt, the members of their Congress,” as inconsiderate and dishonest men, deserving both pity and blame ; but still contends “ that no man is bound to yield an active obedience to a human law, which, either from the light of nature or from revelation, he is persuaded to be contrary to the divine law.” See Campbell’s *Dissertation, Sermons and Tracts*, Vol. II, pp. 136–154.

evil of no man." But the wise preacher saves his hearers from fanaticism by proving, that many inspired mandates are expressed in general terms, so as to devolve on man the duty of affixing the requisite limitations. They often exact a service in unqualified language, so that they may exercise and improve the moral judgment of man in defining the extent of the service. He who aims to guide himself by the general spirit of Christianity, will receive wisdom enough to modify the commands which were not designed for being pressed to the letter. A consistent theologian, believing in the divine right of rulers, cannot believe in their "right divine of doing wrong." They forfeit their heavenly claim so far forth as they plainly transgress the will of Heaven. "The powers that be are ordained of God," says the first preacher to the Gentiles, "*for* rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." Not in all particulars, then, but in those particulars in which these powers become a terror, not to evil works, but to good, the reason for the divinity of their government fails. They have a divine right when they do no wrong, but have no right at all to require a sinful compliance. The heavenly signet of their office bears the inscription, "*for* [the ruler] is a minister of God to thee for good," *for* he is "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil: wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." But this ruler loses his *divine* signet and the *divinity* of his office not in all respects, but to the extent in which he becomes the minister of evil in-

stead of good ; and in which men cannot obey, either for conscience sake, because an enlightened conscience requires them to obey an opposite command of Heaven ; or for wrath's sake, because they will endure a sorer punishment for disobeying God in compliance with a human law, than for obeying him in opposition to it.

But there is another line, still more remote and still more fearful, where the wise minister ceases to recommend even passive obedience and advocates a forcible opposition to the Government which has abused its trust. In these extreme cases, when forcible resistance is a smaller evil than the tyranny otherwise endured, when it is the necessary and the only means of avoiding an oppression too grievous to be borne, when it and it alone promises to be successful in securing the rights of the citizen, whenever submission to tyrants is evidently treason against God,—then the representative of the gospel has served the State by encouraging its patriots in a revolution. If the stone should cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber should answer it, they would tell of many a Sabbath appeal with which this sanctuary once resounded in favor of our fathers struggling to escape from bondage. On the sixth of December, seventeen hundred and seventy-four, our Provincial Congress addressed a circular letter to every clergyman in the colony, for the purpose of securing the influence of his office against the encroachments of the royal power.* Our revo-

* The following is the letter, ■■■ found in Dr. Gordon's History of the American Revolution, Vol. I, pp. 417, 418: "Rev. Sir,—We cannot

lutionary generals often entreated his aid. He welcomed the rising army, blessed them as they girded on their weapons of defence, emboldened them with the thought, which always stirs the soul like a trumpet, that they were in a religious war and fought like the Jews of old for their altars, and the God of the armies of Israel would go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night ; and it is rational to suppose that if the frequent prayer of the sanctuary had not been sent up to heaven in behalf of our forlorn troops, they had fainted under the prolonged severity of their contest.

But the solemn question arises, Who shall judge whether a law be so extremely injurious as to be fitly disobeyed in its precept, or even resisted in its sanctions ? Who shall determine when a statute has passed that line of abuse beyond which it cannot be complied with, safely and rightly ? This inquiry has various meanings. Is it asked, whether

but acknowledge the goodness of Heaven, in constantly supplying us with preachers of the gospel, whose concern has been the temporal and spiritual happiness of this people. In a day like this, when all the friends of civil and religious liberty are exerting themselves to deliver this country from its present calamities, we cannot but place great hopes in an order of men, who have ever distinguished themselves in their country's cause ; and do therefore recommend to the ministers of the gospel, in the several towns and other places in this colony, that they assist us in avoiding that dreadful slavery with which we are now threatened." It was natural that the people who had long revered John Cotton and Thomas Hooker, as fathers to the State as well as the Church, should in the times of the Revolution look up to the clergy as not only spiritual but also political advisers. The influence of such divines as Mayhew, Cooper and Witherspoon, of the Election preachers of Massachusetts, is noticed in Gordon's History, Vol. I, pp. 418-420 ; Grahame's Colonial History, Vol. II, pp. 394, 412, 419, 445, 463.

every citizen may examine the merits of a law ? A State,—above all, a Republic,—is a school for this invigorating study. Is it inquired, whether every citizen may judge of a law, as if he were no less competent to do so than the civil authorities ? He should feel an habitual deference toward them, the pulpit admonishes him to be modest and reverent; but in deciding to obey them against his previous judgment, he does and must decide for himself. Is it asked, whether every citizen may pronounce sentence against a law, without consulting the wise and good of the past or present times ? He should humbly reverence their decision, but in yielding to it and obeying the law on account of it and against his previous judgment, he does and must decide for himself. Is it asked, whether a citizen may disobey any law without solemn and pious meditation ? He must take a large and broad view of disobedience in all its extended results, many of them so disastrous, and he is a rash man if he dare to disobey until he has learned wisdom from communing with the great Ruler. Shall a man judge hastily ? No. Shall he judge in a passion ? No. Shall he follow a perverted conscience ? He should not *have* a perverted conscience which he *can* follow. He should have no conscience but a good one, one that is fit to be followed, and one that is worthy to punish him if he do not follow it. He was made so that he may have, and he ought to have, and not only to *have* but also to *obey* this accurate conscience. Of course he ought to do what, at the time of his deed, after having adopted all possible means of learning

his duty, he thinks to be right, or else what he thinks to be wrong ; and to affirm that a man ought to do what, at the time of doing it, he thinks to be wrong, is a solecism in morals.* Is it then inquired, whether in the last resort every citizen must judge of his political duty ? He must judge *of* it provided that he is to be judged *for* it at the last day. He must decide for himself, unless some magistrate is to stand as a days-man between him and the King of kings at the dread account. A man must determine for himself his *religious* faith, with a view of its everlasting consequences, and he is also summoned to determine his political conduct with a view of life or death, honor or infamy, as its result. This is the condition of our free agency. Herein is the dignity and grandeur of the soul. Here is the solemnity of a life on which depends the life to come ; and here do we find a new and a prominent reason why the God of nations has appointed a class of ethical advisers who may, with his help, train men to make and to keep their conscience pure, to educate it, to rectify it, to preserve it as a safe guide, to obey it when it is, as it always may and should be thus safe, to cherish that spirit which has the promise of leading men into the truth, to suspect their own decision when opposed to that of their lawgivers, to judge of “ the powers that be ”

* The patriots of our land have been trained to a high reverence for their moral faculty. John Adams, writing to his son John Quincy Adams, at St. Petersburg, in 1782, says : “ Your conscience is the minister plenipotentiary of God Almighty in your breast. See to it that this minister never negotiates in vain. Attend to him in opposition to all the courts in the world.” *Letters of Mrs. Adams*, p. 427, 4th Ed.

with a devout and humble temper, and never to venture on disobedience to them save in the last and most dismal emergency, to give up for them every thing which does not forfeit the favor of Him whose favor is life to the nation, and "if it be possible, as much as lieth in them, to live peaceably with all men," and above all with those men who bear the sword not in vain.

But is there not peril in these private decisions ? Peril ! Where is there not peril on this earth, spread all over with snares and pitfalls, as the signs and results of transgression ? Peril ! If we take the wings of the morning, and fly anywhere within the confines of probation, we shall find peril. He who made us meant to try us, and danger is our trial. There is danger in enslaving the conscience. There is danger in subduing men into peace by benumbing the vitality of their individual judgment. A State will never thrive by counselling its citizens to undervalue their moral nature, to brave as womanish their fears of sinning, to become patriotic by becoming indifferent to their conscientious scruples, to sacrifice a general to a mere incidental expediency. A political party will sooner or later lose its dominion, unless it associate with itself the religious sentiment of the people. For, while the interests of men vary, and favor now this party and then another, the religious sentiment holds on and holds out, oscillating sometimes like the needle, but sure to come back again at last, and point to the star which lingers over the abode of justice and of truth. In certain individuals this sentiment is diseased. There is

danger here as well as elsewhere and indeed everywhere. A morbid conscientiousness makes good men discern evils which do not exist. There is danger that men mistake a diseased imagination for a moral sense; and it was well said by Napoleon Buonaparte, that there is no class of men so difficult to be managed in a State as those whose intentions are honest, but whose consciences are bewitched. And, when the religious sentiment becomes fanatical, you cannot repress it by threatening. It laughs at the shaking of a spear. You cannot silence it by mere calculations of expediency. You might as well put a bridle on the north wind as forcibly bridle the tongue of either man or woman who is goaded on by a conscience made too sharp in its friction against common sense. This irritated feeling is calmed quietly, if at all; by gentle appliances, if by any; and these are the appliances of the gospel. And here, again, we see a reason, and a good and a great reason, why the ministers of this gospel are needed by the State; for their business is to assuage a false zeal by a true one, to call up one religious sentiment which may modify another, to qualify fervor by Christian prudence, to restore the equilibrium of the feelings, to intreat the aid of Him who maketh his children wise, and thus to prevent men from being martyrs by mistake, and from making imprisonment the conclusion of the syllogism of which ignorance and fanaticism are the major and the minor premises. And there is one sentiment, which is a religious one, and which the minister may often

evoke for the allaying of unwholesome excitements against the law.*

■ One year ago it would have been deemed idle to insist so long ■ either of the following propositions ; that the general rule for a citizen is to obey the laws, even if he disapprove of them ; or, that this general rule will admit some though rare exceptions ; or, that a citizen, in making these exceptions, must be governed by a conscience enlightened ■ it may and should be. From the days of Cyprian to those of Dr. Witherspoon, these principles have been enforced by the most judicious of the clergy, and have exerted an influence in making good citizens on the one hand, and good rulers on the other. For if citizens are conscientious, they will feel the importance of obeying the laws ; and if rulers estimate the power of the public conscience, they will be careful not to contravene it. But, in the present strife of parties, there is danger that one or another of these principles will be forgotten. The duty of opposing a bad law may be urged so strenuously as to impinge upon the truth, that there are strong antecedent presumptions in favor of obeying every law, and that these presumptions cannot be rebutted, save by the clearest evidence that the enjoined act would be sinful. A heavy burden of proof always rests upon him who would maintain the rightfulness of deviating from the general and momentous rule of obedience. But there is also a present danger, that this rule be pressed so far as to impinge upon the principle so clearly stated by Robert Hall, that the obligation to obey God and that to obey man "are not equipollent, but the former is essential, invariable, and paramount to every other.—Acts 5: 29." There is also a present danger that, for the purpose of making men obedient to law, they will be encouraged to disown the authority of their moral sense ; but this is a suicidal policy, for when men are encouraged to trifle with their moral sense in one sphere, they will soon do it in every sphere of life, and will thus disregard its injunctions of obedience to the civil law. There ought to be no dispute about the principles themselves ; the only question respects the individual cases to which these general principles are to be applied. Men may differ with regard to the particular instances in which the exceptions to the rule of obedience may be allowed. And on this critical question, the answers to which are so apt to be misapprehended, "the poor wise man" has been wont to say, *that every individual case is to be judged by itself, on its own independent merits, as it occurs.* He knows that circumstances often change the character of an outward deed, and he cannot foresee all the circumstances which may make one particular case of disobedience radically different from another seeming at first view to be of the same

I therefore remark, that a third political virtue which the pastor favors is *a love of country*. The names of Luther and Melancthon give to the Saxon and the Prussian a new interest in their father-land. Her Bossuets and Fenelons brighten the glory of France to the eye of her citizens, and the Latimers and Jeremy Taylors of England invest with a singular charm their old homes and mother tongue. It is natural that the fondness of parishioners for their minister should diffuse itself so far as to embrace the country which he loves and serves. The nature of his office is peculiarly congenial with our republican institutions. Even when it was most perverted, and when other high functions lay under an hereditary *caste*, this office remained open to all, and was the only avenue of the poor to places of influence and trust. So the duties of the office are eminently republican. Scholars and civilians have longed in vain to hear the eloquent conversation of Robert Hall; but the framework-knitters of Leicestershire were sought out by him, and were comforted by the words which would have been written in the books

class. Instead of attempting to give a rule which men may apply mechanically, and which is so minute as to relieve them from the necessity of judging for themselves, he strives to give them that moral culture which will qualify them to judge aright in every particular case. Here is the usefulness of his calling. Lieber, in his Political Ethics, Book IV, Sect. 24, says: "It is impossible to give rules [i. e., minute enough to reach all cases of apparently conflicting laws,] for these are cases of extremity; nor can any one else decide for the individual placed in that difficulty." And Mr. Burke says, Works, Vol. III, pp. 47, 48: "Times and occasions and provocations will teach their own lessons."—"But, with or without right, a revolution will be the very last resource of the thinking and the good." There is ■ sound political as well as religious truth involved in John 7: 17.

of more learned hearers. Philosophers have made a pilgrimage to Berlin for an interview with Schleiermacher, and have found him conversing with the children of peasants in the streets. One aim of the Christian ministry is to develop the importance of every individual soul, to give a consciousness of their own worth to the lower classes, to bring together both the rich and the poor before the Maker of them all, and thus to prevent the evils, if not the existence, of pauperism. Just such is the genius of our republican institutions. A wise clergyman—but every clergyman is not wise—will love a republic, for it stimulates the mind to an enterprise which will one day become a Christian zeal. Its citizens are not so joyous, nor so contented, even, as are many subjects of a monarch, but they are trained to think more, to know more, to possess more of character, of real manhood. Hereby are they fitted to love more, to be more vigorous philanthropists, to be more capacious of godly thoughts, to have more of that individuality which is the basis of rich spiritual gifts.* A wise minister will love this republic, for Christian sympathies gave the first impulse to it, and it is in its spirit a humane, considerate and

* In a recent lecture of the Earl of Carlisle (Lord Morpeth) he says of our countrymen: "One of their able public men made an observation to me which struck me as pungent, and perhaps true, that [theirs is] probably the country in which there is less misery and less happiness than in any other of the world." But in no other country is there so much of tact, shrewdness, common sense, energy and consequent capability of exploits. This is not the world for happiness but for exertion, and therefore a philanthropist who sees the need of enterprise and toil for the moral education of the race, must feel a peculiar interest in a country which, like our own, trains men for high efforts.

Christian republic, and it has been, is now, and—he trusts in God—is long to be, an asylum for the persecuted church. It is the habit of his religion to take the form of patriotism. His professional style does not allow him to say so much as others of our “eagle, stars and stripes, the beat of our drum, and the thunder of our cannon,” but he feels inspired by their influence so far forth as they are expressions of a self-respect which may add to the dignity of Christian freemen. The pulpit is no place for him to boast of our shores bounding either ocean; still, his heart is expanded by the thought of them, as of lines of light which are to illumine the East and the West, Africa and Japan. He expects to dig for no treasures along the Sacramento, for he is and is to be a “poor wise man;” but he has a faith that the pillars of learned schools are yet to be laid in these mines opened by human science, and that in these schools religion is yet to sit enthroned, and ‘girded round about with a golden girdle.’ His pious sympathies are bound up with the union of our States; for in that union are blended the interests of free thought and free speech, and of the truth which loves freedom, and of the church and the world. If he cannot justify some of its laws, he would not on their account put asunder what God hath joined together. As for a mother’s faults, he would mourn over them. If he could believe that the liberties of this generous people required him to abridge for a season the liberty of his own political speech, he would yield his freedom to theirs in the gracious words, “I have many things to say unto you, but

ye cannot bear them now." If he *could* believe that these magnanimous States would so far forget their own mutual interests and their duties to the world, as to tear themselves from each other unless the vacant place of some fugitive from bondage were supplied, the minister, true to his name, would run to take that place, and become even the servant of servants, and bind his country together with his own sinews; for his feelings prompt him to say,—'I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish myself enslaved, so I could prevent the deeper slavery and degradation and bloodshed of my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh, to whom pertain the glory and the covenants, the giving of the law and the promises,—*and whose are the fathers.*' In such a land as this, and at such a time as this, an unpatriotic minister is not the wise man who delivereth either the Church or the State, but like "an undevout astronomer, is mad."

The State is indebted to the clergy for their efforts in promoting Christian benevolence. Such benevolence is something more and higher than the religious sentiment and the natural virtues. It quickens, regulates, beautifies, hallows them. It involves a holy love of self, relatives, friends, strangers, enemies, of one's country, one's race, the world, of all in fit proportion to each other, of God more than all, of all because of God, and duly subordinated to him. The life of many a pastor, who cannot calculate on living for two years in his own hired house, but is sent from town to town by the caprice of fickle

majorities, and who, without any certain dwelling place for himself, submits to the expectation of leaving his widow and orphan children homeless and penniless, and who still perseveres in storing his mind with good thoughts that he may comfort the sick and sorrowing, is an example of this benevolence. Often, at least, he was prompted by this virtue to enter an office conventionally excluding him from some recreations which add vigor to other men, and wasting his health by a continuous and peculiar tax on his sensibilities ; an office, in preparing for which, he has anticipated the meagre and ill-paid income * so needful for the supply of his intellectual wants, and in prosecuting which he is often humbled by the deprivation of even the conveniences of life ; and still he magnifies this office by the cheerful discharge of its philanthropic duties. It is the diffusive influence of this virtue that exalteth a nation. The Germans gained the means of their mental supremacy from Saint Boniface, when he carried to them the gospel of love. We may trace the preëminence of our Anglo-Saxon fathers to the mission of Saint Austin, who commended to them that godliness which is profitable unto all things. Designing to speak with a sneer, men have denominated the clergy a “ spiritual police,” † em-

* The average salary of the ministers of New England is said to be only four or five hundred dollars per annum. This sum would be a less inadequate recompense for their labor, if the customs of society and their own mental tendencies, allowed them to employ those economical expedients which are proper for men of a less spiritual calling.

† Dr. Inglis calls the clergy a “ moral constabulary.” “ If there was not a minister in every parish,” says Dr. South on 1 Kings 13: 33, 34,

ployed for preventing the crimes which the civil police would punish with carnal weapons. But in the sneer lies a pleasant truth. Degrading as the phrase may seem, true religion has an economical value. It was given for the State as well as for individuals, and in the reciprocity of benefits the State was by its first Author designed for religion. *Men* have organized civil society with a primary intent of securing physical good, as, for example, "undisturbed rest within unbarred doors." But sleep is not the final good ; it is a mere preparative for another and higher good. *Men* have formed the State with an immediate aim to cultivate the mind, but an active intellect is a means to an end, and is less noble than the end. *Men* have devised the State with a primary design of augmenting their social pleasures. But He who made the State necessary for these pleasures, contrived them as the allurements to that love which is the fulfilling of the law. The State was instituted by men with the direct purpose of multiplying the arts of life and increasing the facilities of commerce. But the finest of the arts have their chief value as persuasives to the beauty of holiness, and commerce was designed of Heaven to encourage the circumnavigations of charity, for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and have none of that benevolence which is the life of the soul. Some of our fathers

"you would quickly find cause to increase the number of constables ; and if the churches were not employed to be places to hear God's law, there would be need of them to be prisons for the breakers of the laws of men."

erred in supposing that political government was intended to be the servitor of a specified *Visible* church.* No visible church is pure enough to receive such a service. None is strong enough to retain its benevolence which involves its meekness, when it looks upon the State as its hand-maid. We must confess the humiliating fact, that the only church fit to be thus honored by rulers is the *Invisible*. The clergy lose their official life when they find it amid the honors of State patronage. Such honors inflame their ambition or their envy, and clerical ambition and clerical envy, taking hold of the eternal world and refining themselves with the truth, which even when perverted is instinct with power, consume the best sympathies of the soul and burn to the lowest depths. The pride of the world is superficial, when compared with that of a priesthood, flattered with the temptation of wielding the strong arm of a civil government in the enforcement of their own creed. The human soul is too weak to bear a union of the temporal with the spiritual authority. But there is a purer church, invisible, composed of all men of all sects who love Jehovah with the whole soul and their neighbors as themselves, who love their country because it belongeth to him, and love him the more because among other and richer gifts he has given them such a country, who obey magistrates "for the Lord's sake," and worship the Lord in sustaining the "or-

* See a Discourse about Civil Government in a Plantation whose Design is Religion; by John Cotton, 1663.

dinances of man," who have that benevolence which comprehends in itself all that is most amiable in character, and on which hang all the law and the prophets. Now it is to enlarge the number and to augment the excellence of such men, that he who doeth all things for eternity hath ordained the State. And it is with the same loving aim that he hath also ordained the ministers of the church. These ministers, then, serve the State in fulfilling its last and noblest destiny, and "they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into" * the kingdom of heaven; while the State aids the ministers in permitting them to think what they please and to preach what they think. The clergy favor the Commonwealth by confining themselves to their rightful sphere and pleading the cause of virtue, while the Commonwealth favors the clergy by confining itself to its own department, and securing to all citizens that mental and moral liberty which is a means of spiritual discipline. The Government provides a system of elementary instruction for the people, and thus furnishes worthy minds for the influence of the pulpit; while in their turn the clergy hallow the Government as the Lord's anointed, and foster those habits of pious allegiance which are the protection of even the law itself. The servants of the State cut the cedar trees and the fir trees and the algum trees out of Lebanon, and with such materials the servants of the church build the temple, without the sound of a hammer or axe or any tool

* Rev. 21: 26.

of iron, and in that temple offer the prayers of the people for all who are in authority.

If, now, the clergy be wise men, they thank you, Legislators, for not spoiling the influence of their creed by commanding men to believe it. They thank you for allowing themselves and their hearers to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, while God worketh in them both to will and to do. They thank you for your generosity to our schools, common to all citizens, and free from sectarian restraint. They beg you to augment this generosity fourfold, since in these *common* and *free* schools lies the hope of the church as well as of the Commonwealth ; and whatever you do for the furtherance of good letters, either in our lower or higher seminaries, you do the same for all wise clergymen ; because, in the confident words of a stern old Puritan, “ though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple. Who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter ? Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing.—Who knows not that truth is strong, next to the Almighty ? ” *

And now, I presume that I shall be allowed in this house, made venerable by an intermingling of so many ecclesiastical and political associations ; in

* Milton’s Areopagitica. English Prose Works, Vol. II, pp. 66, 67. Am. Ed.

the name of the clergy of this Commonwealth, founded as it was by devout men, some of whom were exemplary divines; in the name of its churches, over which the Lord hath in old time appointed so many bishops of whom the world was not worthy; —amid such scenes and such reminiscences, I know that I shall be allowed to pay the tribute of a hearty gratitude to the eminent civilian whom we have been for so many years delighted to honor as our Chief Magistrate.

At a time of trial in our Commonwealth, General Lincoln wrote to General Washington these words: “It is very fortunate for us that the clergy are pretty generally with us. They have in this State a very great influence over the people, and they will contribute much to the general peace and happiness.”* And during your administration, Sir, the clergy of all names and all parties in the Commonwealth have often said to each other, “Our Chief Magistrate is with us in every great and good work, and he will contribute much to the emancipating of our fellow-men from the thralldom of ignorance and vice.”

Nothing can be more fit, than that the President of our Union, the Judges of our Courts, the Governors of our States should manifest a kindly interest in those philanthropic Societies, the aim of which is to illumine the minds of men with the most purifying species of truth, and to enlarge their hearts with the comprehensive charity which involves the highest patriotism. It is meet that these function-

* See Sparks's Writings of Washington, Vol. IX, p. 330. The date of the letter is Boston, Feb. 9, 1788.

aries should blend their influence with that of the clergy, in sustaining the benevolent Associations which aid in binding the distant members of our confederacy together with the cords of a Christian amity, and which as means of prevention are surer safeguards against crime than are all Houses of Correction. It is wise that the men whom the Lord hath ordained to be his magistrates, should relieve those whom he hath ordained to be his ministers, in the care of such Institutions as foster among the people all the humane and kindly virtues.

Sir, you have held many exalted positions in society, but none more honorable than those in which you have animated the Christian patriot to redouble his efforts for expanding the minds, purifying the aims, liberalizing the affections of his fellow-men, and thus forestalling the judgment of civil tribunals by precluding the incipient motive which would otherwise develop itself into a crime.

There are children in our Commonwealth who, having been inspired by your words with a love of temperance and the virtues linked with it, of the Bible and the graces cultivated by it, will remember those words at the close of the half century which has now dawned upon us.

In these philanthropic labors which are so often devolved upon the clergy alone, and which have associated the dignity of your office with the higher dignity of the Christian name, you have illustrated the maxim so distinctly endorsed by the father of his country,—all whose maxims are like apples of gold in pictures of silver,—“ that while just govern-

ment protects all in their religious rights, true religion affords to government its surest support." *

And not only to our Chief Magistrate, but also to you, Sir, who, as the second in executive authority, have been associated with him for so many years ; who have inherited from your reverend father those considerate virtues, at once republican and Christian, which adorned his character as they have often been the ornament of his sacred profession, and who have earned for yourself that name which those who come after you will inherit as a rich legacy, the name of an "*honest man* ;" and to the Honorable Council, who have stood with you shoulder to shoulder during the year past, upholding justice with a strong and steady hand when the hearts of many failed them through fear, and when you needed a more than Roman fortitude in stifling the private sensibilities which sometimes interfere with the public welfare,—to you all, good men and true, the clergy; I am sure, will unite with me in saying, that the cause of sound morals is the better for your steadfastness, and they will all blend their voices in the general prayer :

* In his address to the synod of the Reformed Dutch church in North America, Oct. 1789, Pres. Washington says: " You, gentlemen, act the part of pious Christians and good citizens by your prayers and exertions to preserve that harmony and good will towards men which must be the basis of every political establishment ; and I readily join with you that ' while just government protects all in their religious rights, true religion affords to government its surest support.' I am deeply impressed with your good wishes for my present and future happiness, and I beseech the Almighty to take you and yours under his special care."—Sparks's Writings of Washington, Vol. XII, pp. 167, 405.

“The Lord bless you and keep you.”

“The Lord make his face to shine upon you and
be gracious unto you.”

“The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and
give you peace.”

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The indebtedness of the state to the clergy. A sermon delivered before His Excellency George N. Briggs, governor, His Honor John Reed, lieutenant governor, the honorable Council, and the legislature of Massachusetts, at the annual election, January 2, 1851. By Edwards A. Park ... Boston, Dutton & Wentworth, state printers, 1851.

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